Flight of the Conchords: Recontextualizing the voices of popular culture[1]

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Folk-comedy duo, Flight of the Conchords, have become one of New Zealand's most successful musical exports, having attracted a large international audience through their American-produced TV series. One of their central comic devices is to stylize well-known singers and their music. This article focuses on how Flight of the Conchords shift their phonetic style towards that of various target personas, and how they maintain their own voices as comedians in the process. An acoustic analysis compares Flight of the Conchords' pronunciation of four vowels (KIT, DRESS, TRAP, and GOAT) to the pronunciation of the pop singers being stylized. Both Jemaine Clement and Bret McKenzie manipulate their vowel production towards that of the targeted personas. They also maintain some distance from their targeted roles through a range of devices including the use of exaggerated phonetic style. Through their performances, Flight of the Conchords recontextualize and parody a range of popular cultural products, continuing the enregisterment of certain phonetic styles with the voices of well-known characterological figures.

KEYWORDS: Performance, comedy, NZE, singing, Flight of the Conchords, indexicality, pop culture, intertextuality

INTRODUCTION

The language of 'staged' performance is one of the prime communicative processes for the production, maintenance, and manipulation of culture (Bauman 1977; Bauman and Briggs 1990). As Bauman (2005: 149) states, 'the performance forms of a community tend to be among the most memorable, repeatable, reflexively accessible forms of discourse in its communicative repertoire'. Language in staged performance, therefore, has an important role to play in the enregisterment of language styles with socially identifiable characterological figures (Agha 2003, 2005), be they biographic individuals or social stereotypes. Audiences understand performances using their existing cultural knowledge. They also expand that knowledge by watching and listening to performance forms, developing new indexical links between language and social meaning.

This article investigates the role of pop culture characters in performances by Flight of the Conchords, a folk-comedy duo from New Zealand who have achieved widespread international success in recent years. Their TV series features musical performances which allude to a range of popular music genres, and also to specific singers and their songs. The resulting parody exemplifies the way comedic performances draw on a repertoire of well-known cultural products, and recontextualize the voices of well-known characters. Flight of the Conchords will be introduced in more detail below, once some of the theoretical themes of this project have been outlined.

Performance relies on social and cultural memory, on the ability of an audience to make connections between the present and the past. This is an important aspect of all language use, and is a key theme in much linguistic research, including the work of Bakhtin. According to Bauman (2005: 145), 'Bakhtin's abiding concern was with dimensions and dynamics of speech indexicality – ways that the now-said reaches back to and somehow incorporates or resonates with the already-said'. This approach implies that a speaker's words are never entirely their own, but are loaded with associations – 'each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life' (Bakhtin 1981: 293). Indexicality – the reaching back of current speech to previous encounters – is a part of all language use, but it is perhaps at its most overt and self-conscious in the realm of parodic performance.

Staged performance always involves pre-existing elements, it straddles the line between convention and innovation, between the 'persistent cultural entity that is available for recontextualization in performance' and 'the emergent element, the transformation of this entity in the performance process' (Bauman 1996: 302). Flight of the Conchords bring this tension to the forefront in their performances by referencing well-known cultural personas and products, while simultaneously coming off as original and distinctive. While considering the way intertextual connections are built across a range of semiotic channels, this study focuses particularly on the phonetics of stylization – the use of voice to create characters.

Parody in Flight of the Conchords

Parody includes 'any cultural practice which provides a relatively polemical allusive imitation of another cultural production or practice' (Dentith 2000: 9). These imitations can be achieved through stylization (or relatedly, Referee Design; Bell 1984, 2001) – the mannered projection of personas based on well-known identity repertoires. The musical segments of the Flight of the Conchords' TV show certainly fit this description, though the target of the parody is not always straight forward.

Dentith (2000) emphasizes the possibility for the mocking nature of parody to run in either direction, making fun of the alluded-to text, or using that text to make fun of some present situation or discourse. Hutcheon (1985) argues that

post-modern parody is characterized by heightened reflexivity and relativism, so that the parody comments not only on a prior text but also on itself, questioning the validity of its own value judgments. The stylizations performed by Flight of the Conchords are a good example of this reflexivity. There is certainly a degree of mocking of the alluded-to texts and characters, but there is also what Coupland (2007: 176) calls 'meta-parody', poking fun not just at the target but also at the parody itself. Whatever the polemic target may be in a given instance, the Flight of the Conchords' parody is light rather than cutting – 'the laughter is the only point, and the breakdown of discourse into nonsense is a sufficient reward in itself' (Dentith 2000: 38).

While the audience may enjoy the parodic side of Flight of the Conchords' stylizations of famous personas, there is also some satisfaction to be gained from the mere *recognition* of the texts being referenced. Coupland (2007) notes that one of the characteristics of staged performance is *repertoire focusing*, the repeated performance of well-known cultural texts. Coupland argues that audiences value the interpretation of these known pieces; Flight of the Conchords' skill in stylizing a wide range of texts from a recognizable repertoire is, thus, an end unto itself. The performances analyzed in this paper reproduce and maintain a canon of genres, images, sounds, songs, and perhaps most importantly, characters. Each recontextualization of characters and forms in performance consolidates a culture's repertoire of known texts, as well as giving them new associational resonances.

Managing multiple voices

Culture is maintained and manipulated through many communicative modalities, including linguistic practice. An approach to Flight of the Conchords that foregrounds intertextuality helps us to see how these texts are involved in performatively maintaining and manipulating culture in all its multi-modality, but as we begin to zoom in towards the details of phonetic style, it is the evoking of *people* and *characters* which comes into focus.

The pop singers that are stylized by Flight of the Conchords can be seen as characterological figures (Agha 2003, 2005) – social personas linked to accents. These characters have voices which are recognizable and deployable; they are enregistered (Agha 2003) in the collective consciousness of a certain population. The stylization of these characters, however, does not necessarily entail the abandonment of the performer's 'own' voice. The performer's identity can be co-present with that of the stylized character, and may be indexed simultaneously, creating instances of double-voicing (Bakhtin 1981). 'Encounters with registers are not merely encounters with characterological figures indexed by speech but events in which interlocutors establish some footing or alignment with figures performed through speech' (Agha 2005: 40).

Goffman (1981) usefully separated the various roles a speaker (and other parties privy to some communicative act) can play, and applied a theatrical

metaphor to this ability for people to perform roles, and to perform those roles with a certain attitude or footing. The one who physically produces an utterance is the *animator*, but may not necessarily be the author or the owner of the utterance's content (Goffman 1981). In fact, the animator may actively try to create some distance between themselves and their projected persona, a process which Goffman (1961) calls *role distance*. Coupland's (2007: 347) description of *deauthentication* refers to a similar process, 'a way of meaning that betrays its own artificiality'. Deauthentication and the creation of role distance are a routine part of stylization.

Bakhtin states that an author sometimes exaggerates certain aspects of the language of a character or social group, and sometimes becomes one with the voice being animated, 'maintaining an almost imperceptible distance' (Bakhtin 1981: 302). This constant calibration of role distance may be particularly characteristic of comedy: 'the comic style demands of the author a lively to-and-fro movement in his relation to language' and 'a continual shifting of the distance between author and language' (Bakhtin 1981: 302).

One way that role distance may be increased is through exaggeration. Dentith (2000: 32) states that 'one of the typical ways in which parody works is to seize on particular aspects of a manner or a style and exaggerate it to ludicrous effect'. These exaggerations, which may include phonetic overshoot in the stylization of a voice (Gibson and Bell 2010), still cue the targeted persona, but allow the voice of the performer to come across simultaneously.[2]

Aside from the use of exaggerated style, deauthentication and the creation of role distance can be achieved through a range of means, both linguistic and non-linguistic. Hymes' notion of *keying* is useful here. The keying of an utterance equates to the 'tone, manner, or spirit in which an act is done' (Hymes 1974: 57). Keying may be in harmony with the overt content of an utterance, suggesting authenticity, or it may conflict with it, increasing role distance. 'The signalling of key may be nonverbal, as with a wink, gesture, posture, style of dress, musical accompaniment, but it also commonly involves conventional units of speech' (Hymes 1974: 58). As we shall see, Flight of the Conchords use this full range of non-verbal cues to key their performances as playful. Hymes also states that keying can be achieved through phonetic subtleties such as aspiration and vowel length. Adjustments in vowel position, which will be the focus of the phonetic analysis presented below, also belong on this list of keying devices.

Introducing Flight of the Conchords

Before moving on to the method and results of the study at hand, the performers to be analyzed need some introduction. Flight of the Conchords are one of New Zealand's most successful musical exports, though they describe themselves as 'formerly New Zealand's fourth most popular guitar-based digi-bongo acapella-rap-funk-comedy folk duo'.[3] This juxtaposition of real-life success and

comic self-deprecation is a key appeal of the duo, Jemaine Clement and Bret McKenzie. Through live comedy appearances and a radio series recorded for BBC Radio 2 in the U.K., Flight of the Conchords attracted a large fan base, but it was the 2007 TV series produced by American network HBO that won them a cult following worldwide.

The show revolves around two young musician comedians (Bret and Jemaine, played by Bret and Jemaine), who have moved from New Zealand to New York City to try and make it in the music industry. The show follows the Conchords through their gigs at odd venues with only a few attendees, their failed or imagined romantic relationships, their encounters with their only fan, who is an obsessive stalker, and their dealings with their manager, Murray, who works for the New Zealand consulate and knows very little about music management.

In a typical episode, entitled 'Bret Gives Up the Dream', Bret and Jemaine muse upon their financial struggles. To earn some money, Bret gets a job holding up a hot dog sign on the street, a move which causes his commitment to the band to wane. Murray and Jemaine decide to kick him out of the band, leaving Jemaine playing gigs with a cassette recording of Bret's musical parts. In typical sit-com fashion, Jemaine soon realizes he misses Bret 'a little bit', and by the end of the episode Bret has left his job and is back in the band.

The show's humour comes from the actors' straight-faced matter-of-factness, their eccentric hobbies (like gluing hair onto a bike helmet to make a fashion statement), and from the way they poke fun at themselves and at New Zealand. However, the show would have little to offer if it did not feature the several original songs in each episode which give the show its parodic edge, by alluding to a wide range of pop cultural products, people, and genres.

The TV show is in the format of a traditional musical, switching between plot-based dialogue sections and a pastiche of music-video styled productions of the duo's songs. The songs featured in the show, which are penned by Bret and Jemaine themselves, stylize many different genres of music, highlighting the Conchords' real-life skill as musicians. While Flight of the Conchords reference and imitate other artists, it should be made clear that they are not actually playing other people's songs – all of the Flight of the Conchords' material is original work. But through a range of means, across various modalities, their songs allude to other artists and songs by entering with them into a 'set defined by perceived "likeness" of some sort' (Silverstein 2005: 7), the similarity of different communicative acts across time that characterizes interdiscursivity.

Analyzing Flight of the Conchords, we are presented with a smorgasbord of highly performative language, both spoken and sung. Bret and Jemaine manage a range of personas whilst maintaining continuity in their portrayal of 'themselves'. In this article, these performances will be used to exemplify the way language is implicated in recontextualizing the enregistered voices of popular culture, keeping them alive in cultural memory whilst adding new resonances and meanings.

DESIGN AND METHOD

To investigate the intertextuality and management of multiple voices in Flight of the Conchords, three songs from the TV show will be analyzed, each of which parody a specific popular singer. Bret and Jemaine's phonetic style in these songs will be compared to the phonetic style of the singers being imitated, by conducting an acoustic analysis of four vowels. This method extends previous work on performance, such as Gibson and Bell's (2010) study of the New Zealand animated comedy *bro'Town*, and Gibson's (2010) analysis of the difference between singing and speech for three NZ singers. These prior studies analyzed cases of stylized performance, but without any analysis of the targets of those stylizations. The data under analysis here includes both singing and speech, and is taken from the following sources:

1. Bret and Jemaine's 'normal' speech is analyzed as a kind of baseline from which the stylizations can be considered to depart. In these stretches of speech, taken from dialogues between Bret and Jemaine in the episode 'Bowie', the pair use the voices characteristic of their 'real' identities as New Zealanders.

2. 'Bowie'-this first of the three case studies involves the most data, including:
   - Bret and Jemaine's sung stylizations of David Bowie in the song 'Bowie';[4]
   - Jemaine's spoken stylization of David Bowie from dialogue sections from the same episode;
   - the singing of David Bowie himself, from the songs 'Ashes to Ashes' (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMThz7eQ6K0)[5] and 'Life on Mars?' (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v–IqqusnNQ); and
   - recordings of David Bowie's speech from two interviews, the first from 1973 with British interviewer Russell Harty (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ZtHxP4EMV0), and the second from 1974, an interview recorded in New York with American interviewer Dick Cavett (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v= mHGzXx4uBdQ).

3. 'Inner City Pressure'-the second case study focuses on Bret's sung stylization of Pet Shop Boys in the song 'Inner City Pressure' and the singing of Neil Tennant in two Pet Shop Boys songs, 'West End Girls' (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p3j2NYZ8FKs) and 'It's a Sin' (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rf3Ay1Y2Kks). Additionally, there is some analysis of Neil Tennant's speech from a 1988 interview on American television (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KwVGZ5OLPD8).

4. 'Business Time'-the final case study looks at Jemaine's stylization of Barry White in the song 'Business Time', and compares it to Barry White's sung performances in two songs, 'Can't Get Enough of your Love, Babe' (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O_cgJKpFBKk&feature=fvst),   and

'Never Never Gonna Give You Up' (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=
Bfdt7Bd_urg).

In order to compare Jemaine and Bret's pronunciation in their various guises
to the pronunciation of the personas alluded to, four vowels were chosen for
acoustic analysis: DRESS, TRAP, KIT and GOAT.[6] The first three of these vowels
were chosen since, in New Zealand English (NZE), they have been involved in
a chain-shift which has resulted in KIT being centralized and DRESS and TRAP
being raised. This is a distinctive pattern, quite different to American and British
Englishes, which should highlight the degree to which Bret and Jemaine shift
away from their NZE dialect in their performances. GOAT was also chosen due to
its distinctiveness in NZE as compared to American and British varieties. Gibson
(2010) found that the spoken variant of GOAT in NZE is very different to those
produced in popular music singing styles, with a fronting rather than a retracting
trajectory, and with very little lip-rounding on the off-glide.

Instances of these four vowels were analyzed with Praat (Boersma and
Weenink 2009), using a script to measure the first two vowel formant values
(F1 and F2) from a textgrid[7] which was marked-up by hand. The ideal point
of measurement for monophthongs was the vowel's target point, which was
determined using F1/F2 maxima/minima as appropriate to each vowel. Where
the vowel had a long, target-like steady state, the measurement was taken
roughly at the temporal midpoint of the vowel. For the diphthong GOAT two
measurements were taken, at steady states where possible, representing the first
and second targets of the vowel. In all cases, care was taken to avoid any clear
effects of surrounding phonetic environment.

Certain instances of the vowels were excluded from the analysis in order to
minimize any confounding effects of phonological environment on the data. Since
GOAT is realized differently when it is pre-lateral, pre-vocalic, or before /w/ in many
dialects (Schneider and Kortmann 2004: 292), tokens in these environments
have not been included in the analysis. For the same reason, tokens of DRESS,
TRAP, and KIT occurring before /l/ were also excluded. Additionally, vowels that
were unstressed and had a schwa-like quality were not analyzed.

The token counts from the various sources (as shown in Table 1) are highly
variable, not only because of the varying availability of appropriate target words
in the songs, but also because of the limitations of conducting an acoustic analysis
of singing in the context of its instrumentation. As far as I am aware, this is the
first acoustic study of sung vowels in fully produced musical recordings like this.
Formants are much clearer and easier to measure than I had expected, though
many tokens could not be analyzed due to interference from other instruments
that obscured the vowel formants. Keyboards, pianos, mid-range synthesizers
and guitars caused the most interference problems, while drums tended to cause
fewer problems since the short length of their attack usually obscures only a small
portion of the vowel with which they occur. I also excluded from the analysis
any sections of songs with layered vocal parts, since this would be likely to cause

Table 1: Number of tokens measured

Singer/speaker	Context	ɪ	e	ae+an	ou	Total
Jemaine	'Normal' speech	22	22	27	15	86
Bret	'Normal' speech	26	18	20	13	77
Jemaine	'Bowie' (song)	6	4	8	4	22
Jemaine	Spoken impersonation of Bowie	20	37	29	21	107
Bret	'Bowie' (song)	7	3	14	3	27
David Bowie	'Ashes to Ashes'/'Life on Mars'	10	19	18	13	60
David Bowie	Interviews	21	33	27	8	89
Bret	'Inner City Pressure'	14	8	6	6	34
Pet Shop Boys	'West End Girls'/'It's a Sin'	5	16	5	7	33
Pet Shop Boys	Interview	0	0	0	10	10
Jemaine	'Business Time'	15	13	6 + 1	8	43
Barry White	'Can't Get Enough …'/ 'Never Never…'	11	6	2 + 5	13	37
Total		157	179	168	121	625

problems with formant tracking, and the vowels in the different singing parts could differ from one another. I did include, however, some instances where a second vocal part was very quiet in the mix and I was sure the formant being tracked was accurate for the lead vocal.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

A total of 625 vowel tokens were analysed, and the distribution of these across the songs and speakers is shown in Table 1. Figures 1 to 5, which will be introduced in the analysis below, show averaged results of the F1 and F2 of the vowels for each of the styles, using the following symbols to represent the vowels: KIT (ɪ); DRESS (e); TRAP (ae); GOAT (ou). Note that in some cases the averaged results are based on only a few tokens – Table 1 provides the token counts in each case. The formant values are not normalized since the analysis focuses mainly on within-speaker variation, the differences between guises for each of Jemaine and Bret on their own terms. This means that, when comparing Bret and Jemaine's stylizations to the pronunciation of the targeted singers, it is the shape of the vowel space and the direction of movement in the GOAT diphthong which are under consideration, rather than any differences between the raw formant values.

The first case study presented below, on the 'Bowie' sketches and song, involves sung stylizations by both Jemaine and Bret, and also Jemaine's spoken imitations of Bowie. The second and third analyses focus solely on Bret (for 'Inner City Pressure'), and then Jemaine (for 'Business Time'). I will begin each example by describing the context of the song within the show, then discuss the connections between the Flight of the Conchords' song and the song or artist that it alludes to. Following this, the averaged results for the four vowels under analysis will

be presented, first for the referee and then for Jemaine and/or Bret. Finally, I will consider more generally the way that a range of linguistic and non-linguistic signs are used in these songs to target the various personas, and to take various stances towards those personas in order to create role distance and to deauthenticate the stylization.

The analysis of Bret and Jemaine's dialogue in the TV show demonstrates the positions of the four vowels in their non-stylized (or perhaps, *less* stylized) speech, which is in a New Zealand English (NZE) style. This dialogue is also staged performance, but the scenes chosen for analysis represent good examples of 'normal' Bret and Jemaine, in character as the protagonists of the show (however, these characters are themselves a blurry mixture of fact and fiction). The figures presented in the analysis below show the F1 and F2 values for this 'normal' speech, to allow comparison with the stylizations. The data is shown on Figures 2 and 5 for Jemaine, and on Figures 3 and 4 for Bret. In both cases we see a typical vowel space for the NZE short front vowels, with raised DRESS and TRAP, and centralised KIT. For both Bret and Jemaine, the direction of movement for the GOAT diphthong is one of fronting and raising, from a relatively open starting point.

'Bowie': Context and intertextuality

In the episode entitled 'Bowie' (Season 1, Episode 6), Bret is having issues with self-esteem. David Bowie (played by Jemaine) comes to him in a dream on three different occasions to give him advice, and in each case he introduces himself, first as '1972 David Bowie from the Ziggy Stardust tour', then as '1980 David Bowie from the music video "Ashes to Ashes"', and finally as '1986 David Bowie from the movie *Labyrinth*'. The use of three apparitions, using three of Bowie's many personas, draws attention to Bowie's own image as chameleon, which he discusses in one of the interviews, where he appears with orange hair, heavy white makeup, and an earring dangling from his right ear:

> I find that I'm a person who can take on the guises of different people that I meet, I can switch accents in seconds of meeting somebody and I can adopt their accent. I've always found that I collect – I'm a collector – and I've always just seemed to collect personalities. (Interview from 1973; http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ZtHxP4EMV0)

Layering of personas is self-consciously acknowledged in the first of the scenes in this episode, when Bret mistakes the first apparition for Jemaine. Bowie introduces himself to correct Bret's mistake, to which the response is 'You look a lot like Jemaine'. This sort of self-aware management of personas is common in the show; it *is* Jemaine – Bret can see it, and we the audience can see it. The role distance between Jemaine and his projection of David Bowie is foregrounded when he has to defend his adopted role – 'No! I'm David Bowie', an utterance he delivers with exaggeratedly Bowie-esque intonation and rhythm. These scenes are constantly keyed as non-serious and playful – Bowie's slapstick collision with the kitchen table as he exits is a clear example of this keying.

At the end of his third visit, Bowie says he is running late for a party in space, and after walking along the wall (a reference to his gravity-defying scenes in *Labyrinth*), he jumps through a hole in it, falls into space, and the song 'Bowie' begins. From this point on, we are in 'song mode', and Bret and Jemaine both play the role of Bowie. Bret's Bowie is an astronaut in space, while Jemaine's Bowie communicates with him from earth. Their dialogue with one another takes the multiplicity of Bowies to absurd levels:

Jemaine: This is Bowie to Bowie, do you hear me out there man?
Bret: This is Bowie back to Bowie, I read you loud and clear man.
Both: Ooh yeah man!

The intertextuality in this case is marked much more explicitly than in the second and third case studies below. Biographic identification of David Bowie is scattered constantly throughout both the dialogue sections of the show and through the lyrics of the song. This overt identification of an individual is one of the metapragmatic processes of enregisterment discussed by Agha (2005) – the audience is informed in no uncertain terms that the speech style they are hearing is a stylization of David Bowie.

The song, predictably entitled 'Bowie', is a clear reference to David Bowie's first hit single, 'Space Oddity',[8] which is in itself a play on the Stanley Kubrick film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, a story also presented in the novel by Arthur C. Clarke, and through its title referring all the way back to Homer. This Flight of the Conchords performance has become a link in a particular chain of culture that is reworked and reflected upon through successive performances.

The intertextual links between 'Bowie', 'Space Oddity' (and therefore also *2001: A Space Odyssey*) are drawn in many different ways, including narrative, musical style, costume, and cinematography. In terms of narrative, all of these stories involve a manned mission into space from which the astronaut protagonist does not return. The musical production of 'Bowie' bears similarities to 'Space Oddity', particularly in the sudden shifts in arrangement from acoustic guitar to fully produced band. There are relationships in terms of costume – Jemaine wears the same blue visor that Bowie wears in the video for 'Space Oddity', for example. And shots of the characters floating in zero gravity are common to all three texts: Flight of the Conchords' parody, Bowie's music video and Kubrick's film.

There are also many lexical items which are distinctively Bowie-esque, or at least indexical of the seventies, such as *man, freaky, funky, far out,* and *outrageous.* These are used in mannered, hyperbolic ways (though Bowie's own use of these words was similarly stagey), for example in the following exchange:

Jemaine: How far out are you man?
Bret: I'm pretty far out.
Jemaine: That's pretty far out man!

The intertextuality between 'Bowie' and 'Space Oddity' is, thus, drawn through a wide range of semiotic channels. The characterological construction would

not be complete, however, if it did not also involve some phonetic styling. Before looking at the data for Bret and Jemaine, I consider first the singing and speech of David Bowie himself.

'Bowie': Results of phonetic analysis

David Bowie's singing is representative of a movement in 1970s British progressive/art popular music which turned away from American pronunciation models towards singing styles more indexical of middle-class England (quite a different movement from the turn towards an urban, working-class style in punk, see Trudgill 1983; Simpson 1999; Coupland this issue). As suggested by the quote above, Bowie has a large stylistic range in speech, he 'collects personalities', but the speech represented in the analyzed interviews can be described as a middle-class south-east England variety, though with several vernacular features. After using a glottal stop in the word *duty* in one interview, for example, he says 'sorry, I drop me t's sometimes' – the use of the non-standard possessive pronoun keys his apology as ironic rather than genuine.

Comparing Bowie's singing and speech in Figure 1 reveals both similarities and differences between the two styles. KIT, DRESS, and TRAP are similar in singing and speech except for the more open realizations of DRESS and TRAP in singing. This difference is not surprising given the apparently general preference for sonority in singing (Morrissey 2008; Gibson 2010).
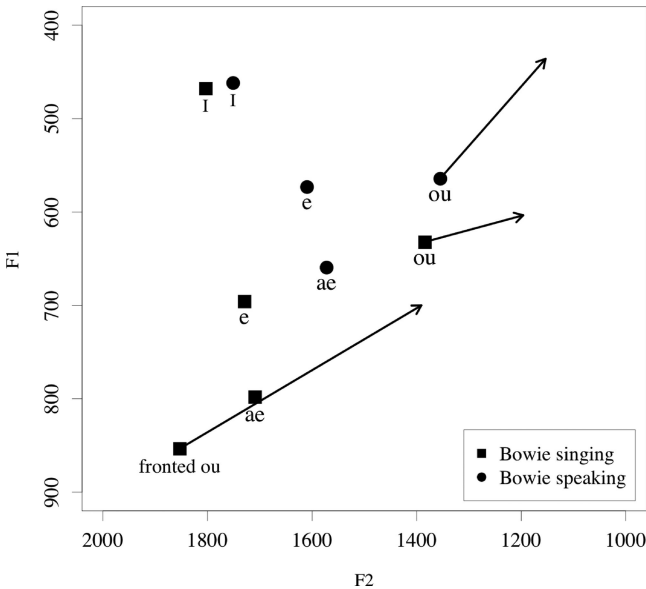
Figure 1: David Bowie singing 'Ashes to Ashes' and 'Life on Mars', and speaking in interviews (ɪ = KIT; e = DRESS; ae = TRAP; ou = GOAT; fronted ou = GOAT vowels with a nucleus F2 greater than 1700Hz)

The results for GOAT are more complex. David Bowie uses three rather different variants. In speech, he tends to use a variant that raises and retracts.[9] In the majority of his singing, GOAT retracts with very little raising, which is characteristic of a normative, American-influenced pop music pronunciation (see Gibson 2010). In addition to these two kinds of realization there are four tokens of a more vernacular, working-class south-east England variant, which has a very fronted nucleus. These four tokens occur in the song 'Life on Mars'; they were analyzed separately and are displayed on Figure 1 with the label 'fronted ou'.[10] The fronted GOAT tokens in 'Life on Mars' sound mannered, knowing, and stagey, particularly in the line 'it's the freakiest sh*ow*'. The salience of these tokens is likely to leave an impression on listeners, strengthening the indexical ties between David Bowie and 'Englishness', despite the fact that only a minority of his GOAT vowels are pronounced in this way.

Impressionistically, Jemaine's take on Bowie is extremely good in both the sung and the spoken stylizations. The stylization involves more than just segmental phonetics, having a distinctive, and recognizably Bowie-esque voice quality and intonation style. In Figure 2, we see that Jemaine's spoken stylization of Bowie shows very similar spacing of the short front vowels to Bowie's own speech. Jemaine's singing, however, is less similar to Bowie's singing, being less spaced out in terms of vowel height and having a relatively retracted KIT. When we compare Jemaine's singing here to his normal speech, however, it is clear that this stylization constitutes a complete re-arrangement of the positioning of these vowels towards that of the targeted voice.
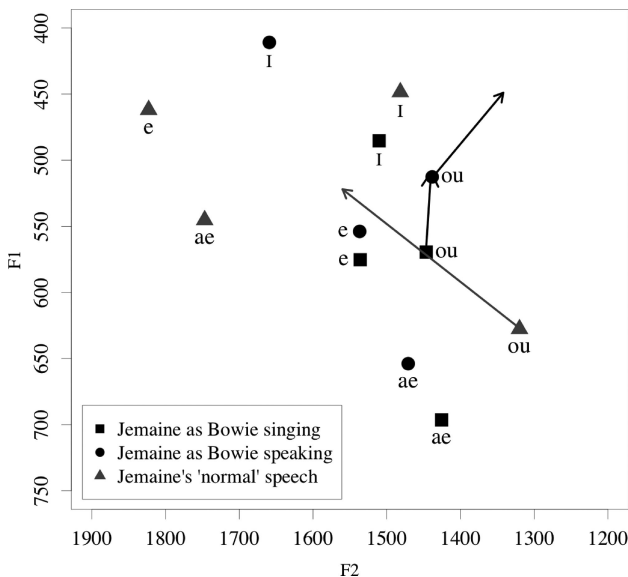

Figure 2: Jemaine's sung and spoken stylizations of David Bowie, compared with his 'normal' speech (ɪ = KIT; e = DRESS; ae = TRAP; ou = GOAT)

Jemaine's stylizations of GOAT are very different to that of his normal speech, with a raised nucleus and no forward movement in the offglide. In both singing and speech, Jemaine targets Bowie's *spoken* style, rather than the retracting variant characteristic of his singing. Jemaine's spoken stylization of Bowie has realizations of GOAT that are very similar in trajectory to Bowie's own speech. Jemaine's sung stylization, on the other hand, appears to exaggerate this variant, having virtually no movement on the front-back dimension.

When looking at Bret's sung impersonation of Bowie in Figure 3, it can be seen that the large gap between KIT, DRESS, and TRAP that is seen in Bowie's singing is replicated, and perhaps exaggerated. Bret has only three tokens of GOAT in the song, one of which, in the word *Pluto*, has a very fronted nucleus. This token sounds mannered and hyperbolic, and fits both acoustically and impressionistically with Bowie's fronted variants in 'Life on Mars'. The *Pluto* token is plotted separately on Figure 3 with the label 'fronted ou'.

Moving on from the four vowels analyzed acoustically, I would like to make a few more targeted observations about Bret and Jemaine's stylizations, relating to both linguistic and non-linguistic elements of the performance. David Bowie's speech in the interviews has both flapped and [w] realizations for /r/, as well as standard alveolar approximant forms. All of these variants of /r/ are replicated by Jemaine in the spoken segments. Jemaine's very first word in his Bowie guise uses the labio-velar form, in /bwɛt/. And only a few lines later, there
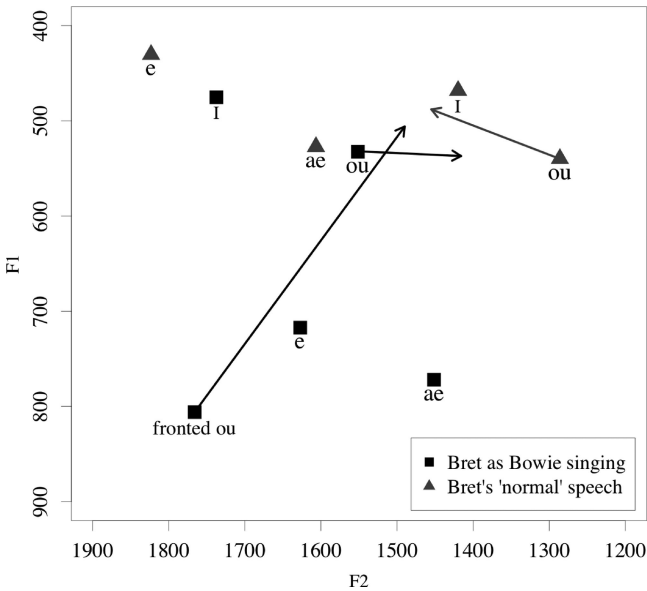
Figure 3: Bret's sung stylization of David Bowie compared with his 'normal' speech (ɪ = KIT; e = DRESS; ae = TRAP; ou = GOAT; fronted ou = GOAT vowels with a nucleus F2 greater than 1700Hz)

is a flap at the end of the word *your* in *your freaky dream*. These features are only used occasionally, as they are in Bowie's own speech. Phonetic details like these build up an impression of Jemaine's stylization as sophisticated and accurate, imitating a range of features enregistered with the speech style of the characterological figure that is David Bowie. While still being 'funny', Jemaine gives a fairly straight-faced performance, being very much 'in character' as Bowie, despite absurd lyrics such as 'Does the space cold make your nipples go pointy, Bowie?'

In contrast, Bret's performance is – shall we say – silly-faced. It involves looking directly into the camera with overdrawn facial expressions, and the phonetics are more stagey, and at times exaggerated. The fronted variant of GOAT in the word *Pluto*, discussed above, is an example, as is a reference to Bowie's song 'Changes' by incorporating 'ch-changes'/tʃə tʃeɪndʒeəz/ into one of the lyrics. Bret's performance seems to rely more on exaggeration than Jemaine's: the pronunciation of *stratosphere* has an unusually open nucleus in the NEAR vowel;[11] the delivery of 'data back to Earth' is also hyperbolic, with the NURSE vowel realized as [aː].

At one point in the song, when singing about how cold it is in space, Bret delivers the line 'do you want to borrow my jumper, Bowie?'. Reference to mundane day-to-day objects is unusual in the pop-song contextual frame, and is one of the many ways in which the performance is keyed as playful and non-serious. 'Jumpers' and 'jerseys' (knitted sweaters) are a recurring theme for Bret – we will encounter another one in the next case study – and the jerseys worn by Bret always feature a cute animal of one sort or another.

The above analysis only begins to grapple with the complexities of voicing involved in these stylized performances. This is more than *double* voicing – we can find two voices just in Jemaine and Bret's management of the line between their 'real' selves and their semi-fictional characters. We approach a rather bewildering level of multiple voicing once we add to these the voice of David Bowie, who is himself portrayed to be putting on various guises from 'Ziggy Stardust' to the 'Goblin King' of *Labyrinth*. Multiple voicings like this seem to be the stuff of comedy, and especially parody (cf. Johnstone's analysis of Pittsburgh radio skits in this issue). The management of these multiple voices relies on a rich, multi-modal mixture of semiotic resources, including but reaching far beyond the phonetic details I am focusing on in this article.

'Inner City Pressure': Context and intertextuality

The song 'Inner City Pressure' occurs at the start of 'Bret Gives Up the Dream' (Season 1, Episode 2) after Bret brings home a bag of groceries which he found lying on the street. To segue into the song, Bret says 'we're poor man', and Jemaine replies 'we are poor, aren't we?'. This song alludes to the 1985 synthpop hit 'West End Girls' by English duo Pet Shop Boys. Unlike the 'Bowie' example, there is no explicit identification of Pet Shop Boys or the song 'West End Girls', but

the intertextual ties which link the songs together are still very definite despite their subtlety. Probably the most specific of the references comes in the form of a particular shot of the video which is carefully reproduced from the 'West End Girls' music video. The singer of each duo (Pet Shop Boys' Neil Tennant, and Bret) is in focus in the foreground while the other member of each duo is seen in the background, partially transparent. In both cases, the backdrop for the shot is a corrugated iron garage door. There are other parallels in the video production, the use of blurry, slow motion close-ups of people in busy city streets, for example.

In terms of music production, the songs are very similar. They share almost exactly the same tempo; both songs have semi-spoken verses and a single, repeated line sung in the choruses. The production of the beats and synthesizers also involves some clear imitation. The lyrics have a similar metrical structure, as well as sharing various themes relating to urban life. Compare, for example, from 'West End Girls': 'Too many shadows, whispering voices. Faces on posters, too many choices'; and from 'Inner City Pressure': 'Neon signs, hidden messages. Questions, answers, fetishes.'

'Inner City Pressure' recontextualizes a specific source, involving the voice of an individuated biographic figure, though this time without overt biographic identification. Because of this, a large portion of the audience may see this as a reference to early-eighties British synthpop in general, rather than to the Pet Shop Boys specifically. These interpretations involve different presuppositions, in one case the characterological figure stylized by Bret is recognized as biographic, and in the other, it is perceived as a social characterization, based more on genre norms than on an individual.

Many cases of intertextuality involve this kind of embedding, so that different audiences might perceive a reference at different levels of specificity according to their familiarity with the text referred to, or other similar texts (see Johnstone this issue). Silverstein's (2005) distinction between type and token interdiscursivity is a useful way to conceptualize these different types of connections between communicative acts or texts. In token interdiscursivity, a piece of discourse reminds the hearer of a specific discursive event in the past. In type interdiscursivity, a piece of discourse brings to mind 'an internalized notion of a type or genre of discursive event' (Silverstein 2005: 9). See also Coupland's discussion (this issue) of the important role genre plays in framing and modulating indexical meanings.

'Inner City Pressure': Results of phonetic analysis

Neil Tennant, the Pet Shop Boys' singer, grew up near Newcastle upon Tyne in the north of England and then moved to London in his late teens. His speech could be described as a middle-class south-east England variety, but with several features that signal his Newcastle upbringing.[12] Impressionistically, Neil Tennant's singing sounds English, largely avoiding the use of the 'USA-5' features (Simpson 1999; and cf. Bell this issue); compared to many British singers, his
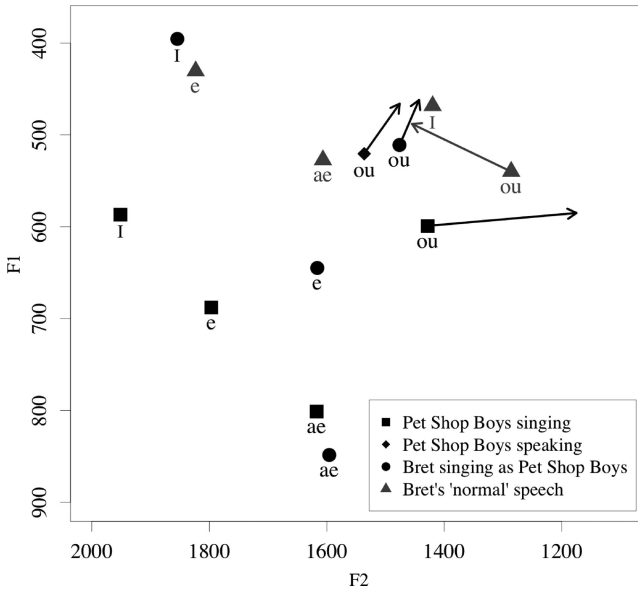
Figure 4: Neil Tennant of the Pet Shop Boys singing 'West End Girls' and 'It's a Sin', and speaking in an interview, Bret's stylization of him in 'Inner City Pressure', and Bret's 'normal' speech (ɪ = KIT; e = DRESS; ae = TRAP; ou = GOAT)

singing doesn't make too much of a stylistic leap from his speech. In Figure 4, we see that KIT, DRESS, and TRAP are evenly spaced out, each vowel being higher and fronter than the last. Tennant's sung GOAT vowel, however, is more in the American mould, with a retracting tongue position and increasing rounding.

In Bret's stylization, his GOAT vowels have a very different trajectory. They are nearly monophthongal, with subtle raising but little change in F2. In order to investigate this disparity between the singing of the referee and Bret's stylization, ten instances of GOAT from an interview with Tennant were analyzed. The average pronunciation of these tokens is plotted on Figure 4, and is very similar indeed to Bret's imitation. It seems that Bret is aiming at the variant used by Tennant in speech, not the American-influenced backing diphthong which he produces when he sings. Perhaps this raising version of GOAT is one of the features of the middle-class English dialect which Bret has 'seized upon' as being 'important' or 'noticeable' to him at some level (Schilling-Estes 1998: 54), and is therefore used for display. Another possibility is that Bret avoids using the American-influenced retracting GOAT variant, sensing that it might compromise the Englishness of his stylization.[13]

In terms of the short front vowels, Bret's performance has an especially large gap between KIT, and DRESS and TRAP. This may be a hyper-performance on Bret's part, and it is of interest that the most extreme of the raised KIT vowels and open DRESS vowels come in the first few lines of the song: 'Inner city life, inner

city pressure, the concrete world is starting to get ya'. This initial exaggeration may be used strategically to help cue the shift in dialect from the NZE of the preceding dialogue to the English variety used in the song. Agha (2005) argues that contrasting of voices is one of the metapragmatic processes involved in enregisterment – this process appears to be at work in the first few seconds of 'Inner City Pressure'.

In this performance, Bret gives a more straight-faced delivery than in 'Bowie'. The keying of the song as comical comes through absurd lyrics, and there are instances where Bret appears to deauthenticate his characterization of the Pet Shop Boys persona using phonetic means. For example, Bret produces a hyper-correct pronunciation of *expanding* as /ɪkspɑːndɪŋ/, so that it rhymes with *demanding* in the lines: 'the city is alive, the city is expanding, living in the city can be demanding'.[14] This rhyme does not feel like a mistake, but a mannered exaggeration – a little glitch in the stylization through which Bret the animator peeks out of his Pet Shop Boys character.

As in the 'Bowie' song, there are references to everyday items which would ordinarily be taboo in a pop song: 'You've pawned everything, everything you own, your *toothbrush jar,* and a *cameraphone*' (which is literally a camera taped to a phone), and in 'Hey man, I just want some *muesli*'. The song also includes more animal-themed jerseys, both in Bret's costume (a satirically classy turtle-neck with only the subtlest stripe of deer walking across the middle) and lyrically in the line 'standing in the sitting room, totally skint and your favourite jersey's covered in lint'. Bret holds up the lint covered jersey, which features a large owl. This animal-themed clothing is a constant reminder to the audience that while this may appear at times to be the 'real' Bret, it is not – it is Bret parodying Bret. This parody is carried off by injecting the indexicalities of uncool into the characterization through a range of signs, including clothing. It is to some extent up to the audience to interpret the polemic direction of the parody. Is it the one who wears pictures of cute animals that is being mocked, or is it, by contrast, the pretentiousness of thinking it is uncool to wear pictures of cute animals that is being criticized?

'Business Time': Context and intertextuality

In 'Sally Returns' (Season 1, Episode 5), Jemaine runs into Bret's ex-girlfriend, Sally, at the laundromat. After establishing that they are both single, Sally states that she would like to settle down – Jemaine then fantasizes about the domestic life he might have living with Sally, and the song 'Business Time' begins.

The song is in a funk/soul style, and draws on the 1970s repertoire of soul/funk/disco singer Barry White. The song plays on a contrasting of the romantic Barry White persona against the characterization of Jemaine and Sally's sex life as routine and highly unromantic, by describing the brushing of teeth as foreplay, for example. In this case, the comedy appears to reference Barry White as a figure, without referring directly to any one of his songs in

particular. Two songs were chosen for analysis, 'Can't Get Enough of your Love, Babe' from 1974, and 'Never Never Gonna Give You Up' from 1973. These were chosen on the grounds that they are two of Barry White's most well-known singles, and also because there are many parallels between 'Business Time' and these two songs.

Musically, 'Business Time' features similar conga rhythmic patterns to 'Can't Get Enough of your Love, Babe', and a similar melody in a high-pitched synthesizer line as that used in 'Never Never Gonna Give You Up'. There are also strong parallels in terms of lyrics – a quick scan through Barry White's *Ultimate Collection* shows that romantic love-making is the primary lyrical focus. Compare Barry White's 'been making love for hours and, baby, we're still going strong' in 'Never Never Gonna Give You Up' with Jemaine's 'making love for two minutes, when it's with me, girl, you only need two minutes, because I'm so intense'.

The main way the reference to Barry White is signalled, however, is through Jemaine's vocal delivery. In the intro sections of many of his songs, Barry White woos his lover. There is one recorded vocal that utters sweet nothings in a deep voice, while in another recorded vocal part he sings/speaks sensuous *oohs* and *aahs*, and breathes loudly. This sensuousness even extends to a loud, inhaled, bilabial fricative. Many of these features are replicated, hyperbolically, at the start of 'Business Time'. Jemaine uses a deep spoken voice, alternating between glottalization and breathy voice. And there are many instances of grunty vocables in the introduction and throughout the song (*yeah, ooh, aah* – the kind of wordless singing which could count as both *voice as instrument* and *voice as body* in Frith's 2002 terms, discussed by Coupland in this issue).

'Business Time': Results of phonetic analysis

In Figure 5, we see that in Barry White's vocal performances, the three short front vowels are arranged in a similar pattern as we have seen, above, for British styles, though there are some dialectal differences. Many tokens of KIT in Barry White's singing are diphthongized, having a high front nucleus with a centring offglide. Additionally, White's TRAP vowels are consistently raised before nasals, as is the case for many American dialects. Pre-nasal TRAP is averaged and plotted separately from the other instances of TRAP on Figure 5, and is represented with the symbol 'an'.[15] The GOAT vowel raises slightly and retracts, with a lip-rounded off-glide.

Jemaine's performance shows a strikingly similar arrangement of the vowels. Overall, Barry White's vowel space is rather condensed on the F1 dimension, and this is replicated in Jemaine's stylization. Jemaine's one instance of TRAP before a nasal, in the word *pants*, is very much fronted and raised compared to the rest of his TRAP vowels. Jemaine also has several tokens of diphthongal KIT.

A more general feature of Barry White's singing which is stylized by Jemaine is a tendency towards elision or weakening of consonants. This appears to be
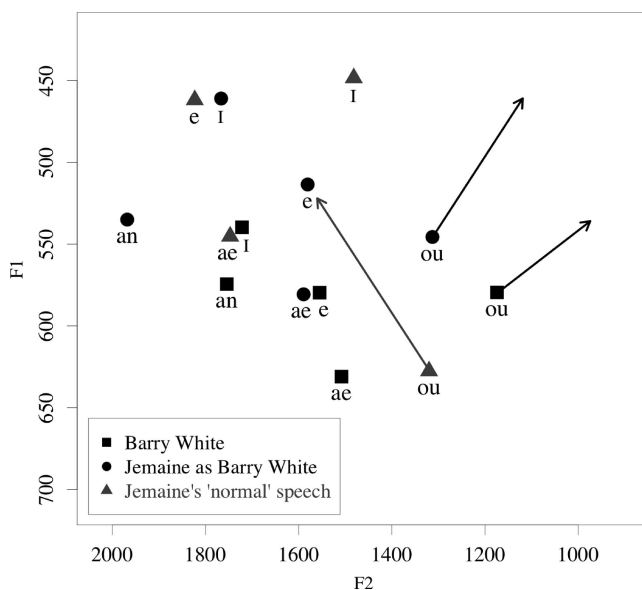
Figure 5: Barry White singing 'Can't Get Enough ...' and 'Never Never ...', and Jemaine's stylization of Barry White in 'Business Time', with Jemaine's 'normal' speech displayed for comparison (ɪ = KIT; e = DRESS; ae = TRAP; an = pre-nasal TRAP; ou = GOAT).

indexical of smooth and relaxed, or perhaps of the state of experiencing pleasure. For example, Barry White's use of labial approximants in place of stops in the word *baby*, and Jemaine's replication of this style, producing, for example, [ɪz] for *it's*. These phonetic subtleties play a large role in indexing Barry White, creating a distinct persona which is laminated onto the Jemaine character who continues to express himself, largely by exaggerating the stylization of that persona.

There are various signs of this exaggeration in the form of phonetic overshoot. For example, the BATH vowel in *after* (which would be pronounced with [a] in Jemaine's NZE speech), is exaggeratedly fronted and raised well beyond any pronunciation we would hear from Barry White. There is very mannered exaggeration in the delivery of the vocables (e.g. extended *yeah*) – these are overdone to the point of parody. There is also some confused use of post-vocalic /r/. Barry White tends to use /r/ after NURSE (e.g. in *girl*) but not so much in other environments. For Jemaine, the /r/ is missing in one instance of *girl*, but present elsewhere in the word *important*, where it 'should' be absent. These seem more like 'slip-ups' to me, though of course this is difficult to verify. Whether these 'inaccuracies' are accidental or mannered, they have the effect of keeping the 'Jemaine' persona co-present with the 'Barry White' persona, which is consistent with the overall comic strategy of the song.

Sally is given two lines in the song, albeit in reported speech form. Jemaine introduces each of the lines with 'you turn to me and say something sexy like . . .' and then voices Sally's words in the audio track, while Sally mouths the words in the video – this creates a very literal instance of double-voicing. What is interesting about Sally's two lines (which are: 'I might go to bed, I've got work in the morning' and 'Is that it?') is that Jemaine voices them with a New Zealand accent – raised DRESS in *bed*, and non-rhotic, raised, fronted, and rounded NURSE in *work*, for example. Sally is an American character so there is nothing literal about this choice of voice for her. Rather, it plays on the deprecation-of-New-Zealand theme that runs through the show. The New Zealand accent here seems to be indexical of down-to-earth and practical, but also of unsexy and unglamorous. The KIT vowel in the second of Sally's lines in the song (voiced by Jemaine), when she says 'Is that it?', is more centralized than any of the KIT tokens in Jemaine's 'normal' speech, suggesting that the New Zealand accent is being exaggerated for comic effect here. This may be another example of the process of contrast described by Agha (2005) and discussed above regarding the first lines of 'Inner City Pressure'. Adjacent speech styles can be contrasted with one another to draw attention to the indexical relations between those speech styles and their associated personas.

DISCUSSION

The three case studies above show how phonetic stylization is used by Flight of the Conchords as one ingredient in the creation of parody. Intertextual links are formed multimodally, through costume, cinematography, musical production, lyrical themes and style, facial expressions, and the use of voice – as instrument, as body, as person, and as character (cf. Frith 2002; Coupland this issue). While I have focused on the shifts in the pronunciation of four vowels to achieve the *voice as character* dimension of these parodic imitations, it is the full range of semiotic signs which provides a frame inside which these dialectal features take on social meaning. The targeting of personas is not straight-forward, but involves multiple voicing. Flight of the Conchords create multi-layered performances, in which targeted characterological figures such as David Bowie and Barry White are embedded within the ongoing voicing of 'New Zealand comedian' personas which tie the performances together. The jokes within each song unfold on a line-by-line basis, and are keyed in different ways, continually manipulating the salience of these multiple voices, the voices of the referees, those of the semi-fictional Bret and Jemaine we see in the TV show, and those of the 'real' Bret and Jemaine we assume to exist in some sense underneath all of this.

Flight of the Conchords deauthenticate the personas they project, and key their performances as light and playful through a range of devices: absurd lyrics; exaggerated facial expressions; ironic clothing; and phonetic overshoot. Most of the instances of overshoot appear to be hyper-performances to create parody, while others might be 'slip-ups' (Jemaine's misplaced rhoticity in 'Business Time',

for example). There are also cases where a performance seems to be based on *ideas* about how a referee 'should' sound, rather than how they actually sound. The fact that Bret's sung GOAT vowels in 'Inner City Pressure' align with the *speech* of the referee rather than his *singing* suggests that Bret is drawing more on social stereotype than on memories of the specific biographic individual in context. Neil Tennant does use a lot of English features in his singing, so Bret's overextension of the English style is not altogether surprising, and may actually be very effective.

This study has shown these performers adjusting their phonetics in sometimes dramatic ways, making shifts across several vowels to target the voices of well-known figures. One of the characteristics of performed language is that the performer is under an intensified gaze and is expected to possess and display skill. Flight of the Conchords use the stylization of pop culture voices as one way of doing this, whilst simultaneously engaging in repertoire focusing, the reproduction of known cultural products.

As Bauman and Briggs (1990) argued, verbal art always involves a tension between existing cultural entities and the new meanings which emerge from their recontextualization. In this article, I have focused on the means by which Flight of the Conchords point to those existing 'persistent' cultural entities through stylization and parody. But, it is important to note how very strong the emergent element is in these performances. Recall that, despite being heavily laden with intertextual referencing, these songs are for all intents and purposes original – they allude to, but they do not plagiarize their sources. It is not just the backward-looking aspect of the show which audiences enjoy, it is perhaps most importantly the show's high level of creativity and novelty.

In the introduction to this essay, I quoted Bauman (2005: 145) describing Bakhtin's perspective on interdiscursivity: 'the now-said reaches back to and somehow incorporates or resonates with the already-said'. Having seen this process at work in Flight of the Conchords, we should now consider the ways in which the now-said also 'reaches ahead to, anticipates, and somehow incorporates the to-be-said' (Bauman 2005: 145). The three Flight of the Conchords songs analyzed here do not represent the end-of-the-road – they are just a few links in an ongoing chain of interdiscursivity. I have focused on the way the present refers to, and is full of, the past. But having been entextualized, and having gained prominence, these Flight of the Conchords performances now become part of the pop culture repertoire which other parodists will reproduce in their own performances.

This is a reality for Flight of the Conchords: in 2009, they appeared (voicing themselves) in an episode of the New Zealand animated sitcom *bro'Town* (cf. Gibson and Bell 2010), where the lyrics of 'Business Time' are fused with the tune of the Crowded House song 'Weather with You' in a cartoonized singalong between Jemaine, Bret and Crowded House's Neil and Tim Finn. More recently, Flight of the Conchords have broken through to one of the most prolific and richly intertextual parodic cultural products, *The Simpsons*. Jemaine and Bret take on

another cartoonized form in order to give Lisa Simpson music lessons at a summer camp. This mass-mediated recontextualization of the characterological figures that are Bret and Jemaine is likely to be recycled through time in endless YouTube viewings, DVD watchings, and TV re-runs. Fans of *The Simpsons* will discover Flight of the Conchords and watch their show. In doing so, they may discover David Bowie, his music video for 'Ashes to Ashes', his performance in *Labyrinth*, and maybe even Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

This embedding of texts within texts within texts illustrates the pervasiveness of interdiscursivity, and highlights the important role which performance plays in the maintenance and creation of characters and voices. Ultimately, some of these voices are bound to leap off the screen into situated discourse. I have heard friends doing stylizations of Jemaine's stylizations of Bowie, and of Murray, the manager, doing roll calls at band meetings – recontextualizations which continue the enregisterment process linking speech styles to characterological figures.

This study, as with the others in this theme issue, suggests that the mannered use of language seen in staged performance can be a fruitful resource for sociolinguistic inquiry. This is not a new agenda. 'A long tradition of thinking about language and society argues that verbal art provides a central dynamic force in shaping linguistic structure' (Bauman and Briggs 1990: 59). The sociolinguistic processes we see 'on stage' – interdiscursivity, and the projection and management of multiple voices – are processes which occur in day-to-day language use, but in staged performance these processes are under the spotlight and become the *subject* of discourse as well as its medium.

NOTES

1. This research was made possible with research funding from Auckland University of Technology's Faculty of Applied Humanities (grant #AX10/14). My thanks to Allan Bell, Dave Britain, Monica Heller, and Dick Bauman for their helpful and insightful comments on the first draft of the article. I am also indebted to Allan Bell for guidance throughout the project.
2. Of course, not all cases of phonetic overshoot will be done on purpose. Accidental exaggeration, hypercorrect forms, may also occur. This is particularly likely in the stylization of dialects with which the performer is less familiar (cf. Le Page and Tabouret-Keller's 1985 riders to linguistic modification).
3. In promotional material, and on their Facebook page.
4. Note that the three Flight of the Conchords songs can be viewed on the DVD of the first season of the show. A search on YouTube will also bring up these three songs.
5. All URLs cited were last accessed on 8 June 2011.
6. I refer to the vowels under analysis according to their lexical set names throughout (see Wells 1982).
7. A textgrid is used to label a soundfile with either intervals or points that are being analysed. The script was originally based on 'collect_pitch_data_from_files' distributed under the GNU General Public License, copyright Mietta Lennes, 2003, and was subsequently modified by Jen Hay.

8. 'Space Oddity' would clearly have been the most logical choice of song to analyze in this project, however the majority of the recording has two clearly non-identical lead vocal recordings, which would make acoustic analysis of the vowels problematic. 'Ashes to Ashes' was chosen instead since it is mentioned in the episode, and 'Life on Mars' was chosen partly because it exhibits a distinctive variant of GOAT which Bret imitates.

9. Note that both tongue retraction and an increase in lip-rounding lower F2. In general, where there is a decreasing F2 in the measurements of GOAT vowels, it is likely to be caused by a combination of these two articulatory movements.

10. The cut-off for distinguishing tokens of this kind from the retracting variant more characteristic of Bowie's singing was an F2 of greater than 1700Hz in the nucleus.

11. Perhaps this is a hypercorrect form, reacting to the NZE merger of the NEAR and SQUARE vowels on NEAR.

12. Many thanks to Dave Britain for providing impressions of Neil Tennant and David Bowie's speech styles.

13. Bret is definitely capable of stylizing the retracting variant. This was demonstrated in an acoustic analysis of a song in which he parodies African-American R&B artists Usher and R. Kelly, though this analysis was not included in the final version of this article.

14. While both words are pronounced with /æ/ in AmE, many varieties (including both NZE and the British target variety in this stylization) use /ɑː/ in *demanding* and /æ/ in *expanding*.

15. Note that the other songs exhibited no pre-nasal raising of TRAP – this feature is unique to the Barry White songs and 'Business Time'.

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